

THE CATALYST

THE NEWSLETTER FOR PAI DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

IN THIS MOMENT, ADVOCACY MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

Domestic policies threaten health and rights beyond U.S. borders

A person's right to bodily autonomy and good health are fundamental to equity, advancement and prosperity.

Unfortunately, these rights are increasingly under threat.

Here in the United States, states have passed a record number of anti-choice laws in 2021, including the devastating bill in Texas that bans nearly all abortions. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court heard a case that could decide the future of *Roe v. Wade*.

What happens in the United States doesn't just stay here. The ideology and movements behind domestic laws are the same forces pushing for an anti-choice U.S. foreign policy and fueling anti-abortion and anti-women's rights activities around the globe.

This is why PAI's advocacy with our government and the support we provide to our global partners for advocacy with their own governments are so urgently needed.

PAI believes that everyone, no matter where they live, has the right to make all decisions about their bodies, their lives and their futures. It's the reason we fight for U.S. funding and policies that support comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and rights around the world. It is also why we partner with advocates who are working to expand health and rights in their own countries.

We know that strong, sustained advocacy works. It's how we were able to maintain steady funding for international family planning programs throughout the four years of a hostile Trump-Pence administration. And how we are finally closer than ever to the permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule, a harmful U.S. policy that puts people's health and lives at risk by cutting off access to critical care in communities around the world.

It's also how PAI's 96 funded partner organizations across 33 countries — including the three featured in this issue of *The Catalyst* — are driving real, sustainable progress in their countries and communities.



Every time you donate to PAI, you are helping to fund this change. Your ongoing generosity helps drive the advocacy needed to ensure that policies and funding support people's health and well-being.

When women and young people have access to information, supplies and services, they have the power to make decisions about their bodies. To have children when and if they want to. To say "no" to the violence they encounter at the hands of others. To access the reproductive health screenings they need for a long and healthy life. To be in charge of their futures.

For PAI, our global partners and loyal donors like you, these are outcomes worth fighting for. As we look to the new year ahead, we hope we can count on your continued support to keep our advocacy and this global movement strong.

The power of our movement



For many of us living in the United States, the beginning of 2021 ushered in a much-needed sentiment of hope, empathy and love for humanity. There was energy, optimism and a relief that the harmful rhetoric and policies thrust upon women and communities here and abroad would subside.

Yet these past few months have reminded us that good intentions and aspirations continue to be threatened by an undercurrent that erodes the right to health, the autonomy of women and youth and the freedom to choose. Restricting sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States hurts our communities here and renews and justifies anti-choice and anti-rights momentum around the world. PAI and our partners must remain vigilant, vocal and veracious in our advocacy to mitigate the impact of these threats.

PAI directly engages with policymakers in our nation's capital and shows the toll of bad policy on communities. We amplify data and evidence and develop policy perspectives for peer advocates to use. But most importantly, we have a trusted seat at multiple tables, one that we have earned by making the ongoing intolerance of people's freedom to assert their sexual and reproductive health and rights unacceptable.

Your financial support and encouragement of PAI have enabled us to step forward and hold those in positions of power accountable. I, and the 4.3 billion people of reproductive age who will lack at least one essential sexual or reproductive health service during their lifetimes, thank you.

PAI will remain steadfast in our mission, but we are not on this journey alone. Our peer advocates, who PAI provides flexible funding and advocacy support to, are among those leading the charge in their own countries.

Our collective efforts to achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights must be bolstered and sustained. What does it take?

For me, it comes down to three key things.

First: Our movement must be defined and led by bold, diverse voices — ones that are recognized, elevated and prioritized in decisions that impact their lives.

Second: We need robust and evidence-informed advocacy driven by fellow champions on the front lines who best know the needs of their communities.

And last but certainly not least: It takes flexible, sustained investments to ensure that PAI and our peers have the tools and resources we need to fight for supportive policies and funding and to hold governments accountable to meet peoples' needs.

Thank you for being part of this movement and helping to keep it strong. Together, we will keep fighting for a just and equitable world where sexual and reproductive health and rights are a reality for all.

In solidarity,

Nabeeha Kazi Hutchins
President and CEO

Locally led advocacy is key to sustainable progress

PAI knows that robust, sustained advocacy powered by local experts and communities is the only way to create lasting, transformative change. With support from donors like you, we are able to offer advocacy guidance, technical support and flexible funding to partners across the globe that are fighting for health and rights in their countries.



"If you go to the service centers, they give you these certain looks, these looks of disapproval or these looks of judgment to say, 'You're so young. Why are you in here accessing these sexual and reproductive health methods?'"

— AMANDA BRENDA SAUTA



Evidence-based advocacy

Government commitments to expanding access to sexual and reproductive health care are an important first step, but far too often, these promises don't translate into real progress for women and girls at the community level.

In 2019, PAI partnered with the [Africa Health Budget Network \(AHBN\)](#) to roll out the Motion Tracker tool in Nigeria. Developed by PAI partner [Samasha](#), Motion Tracker is a collaborative approach that gives advocates an effective way to track progress on their government's Family Planning 2020 commitments, including increased funding for modern contraception and reproductive health services.

When AHBN analyzed the Motion Tracker data, the results showed that the government had only allocated \$830,000 for family planning commodities in 2019 — far short of the \$4 million it had committed to spending.

The Motion Tracker data strengthened AHBN's advocacy efforts as it worked with government officials, civil society and other stakeholders to develop recommendations on how to address the gaps.

Thanks to AHBN's evidence-based advocacy, the Nigerian government allocated the full \$4 million the following year, which will expand access to affordable family planning for more women, young people and communities.



Christopher Pillitz/Corbis Historical via Getty Images

Youth-led advocacy

In Malawi, young people face multiple unique barriers when trying to access youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and care.

"If you go to the service centers, they give you these certain looks, these looks of disapproval or these looks of judgment to say, 'You're so young. Why are you in here accessing these sexual and reproductive health methods?'" shares Amanda Brenda Sauta, a volunteer with PAI partner [Youth Response for Social Change \(YRSC\)](#).

Stigma isn't the only barrier limiting young people's choices. Government-run health facilities frequently run out of family planning and reproductive supplies, contributing to high rates of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

YRSC saw the opportunity to harness the power of young people as advocates and collaborated with PAI to enhance its approach. PAI's strategic guidance and flexible funding helped the organization develop clear, impactful advocacy actions and train a cohort of youth advocates.

YRSC's strong, strategic advocacy paid off. The Machinga District Health Office agreed to a 10% increase in funding for adolescent and youth family planning. It included a budget line in the three-year plan for the first time, signaling a long-term commitment to improving access to information, services and supplies.



Grassroots advocacy

In India, Health and Wellness Centers are designed to offer a wide range of services, including family planning, contraception and other sexual and reproductive care services. But the rollout of these facilities has been slow, leaving affordable care out of reach for far too many women, girls and communities.

PAI partner [Sahayog Society for Participatory Rural Development \(SAHAYOG\)](#) has been working to address this in the Uttar Pradesh state through advocacy and community-led monitoring and accountability. PAI's technical assistance and flexible funding are helping SAHAYOG clarify national guidelines, gather evidence to strengthen its advocacy efforts and help identify opportunities for grassroots advocacy.

Many government services were paused during COVID-19, leaving communities in rural areas without access to family planning counseling and contraceptives.

SAHAYOG-trained women leaders sprang into action, successfully advocating with local government officials to resume services and helping to open temporary health centers, providing essential care — including contraceptives — to more than 10,000 people across 65 villages.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FOR ALL

Donor and board chair Kim Brooks reflects on how supporting PAI allows her to honor the right to choose



How did you become interested in sexual and reproductive health and rights?

When I was growing up in Boston, my mother worked as a nurse in a unit focused exclusively on women's services. One day, after seeing her push past protesters to get into work, I realized her work

was somehow controversial. She explained to me what abortion was and why she believed it should be among the reproductive resources available to women, telling me, "Every person should have the ability to decide when they become a parent."

That just made sense to me — it shouldn't matter whether that choice was enabled by reproductive education, contraceptives or safe abortion. As I grew older and began to understand the political nuances of reproductive rights, my convictions simply deepened.

How do you feel that PAI advances this mission?

I entered my reproductive years in the 1990s, at a time when Roe v. Wade secured a woman's right to choose and reproductive options were largely enabled in the United States. But I knew there were many places in the world where women and girls had little or no say when it came to their reproductive rights.

PAI partners with advocates working to expand health and rights in places where women and girls may not be able to speak or may be challenged to organize. Supporting PAI, both as a member of the board and a donor, allows me to honor what I believe is a fundamental right for all.

As you look ahead, what do you see as the long-term opportunities for PAI to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights?

PAI's distinct value proposition is how it works: by partnering with established local organizations and supporting their efforts to advance reproductive rights at the local, regional and national levels. As the international development field rethinks how best to support in-country activities, I think we'll find that organizations like PAI that have a history of true partnership with regional counterparts are uniquely positioned to respond quickly and scale solutions.

What message do you have for PAI donors and supporters?

Thank you for making it possible for PAI to do its work. The organization is packed with mission-driven staff who are passionate about the work they do. Most of their projects are sponsored by organizations with strategic reasons to fund distinct initiatives. But donations from individuals like you impact how well PAI can function. Good organizations only become great ones if they can invest in their infrastructure, staff development and evolution. Your unrestricted donations ensure that PAI's strength as an organization matches the quality of its work.

KEEP OUR MOVEMENT STRONG

Help us seize opportunities to make sexual and reproductive health a reality for all in the year ahead. Visit www.pai.org/donate and make a tax-deductible gift today.

For more information on ways to support PAI's work, please contact Carmen Mullins at cmullins@pai.org or +1 (202) 557-3415.

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